

BARRE GAZETTE

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Board hears town administrator update

By Ellenor Downer
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BARRE – The Select Board meeting on Monday, March 2 lasted just over 18 minutes.

Town Administrator Melanie Jackson gave a Fiscal Year 2024 audit update. She said she was working with the Treasurer/

Collector Shelby LaMothe to make adjustments for FY 24 to reconcile the books before the auditors look over the books.

She said they should be done with all the adjustments the end of this month. She said some data was not recorded correctly by previous Treasurer/Collectors. She also said she had a meeting with Central Massachusetts

Regional Planning Commission about possible grants from the town.

Water fees

She had a meeting with the Water Commission last Friday, Feb. 27 to discuss uncollected water fees. According to the town website, water bills are billed quarterly. Bills for October, November and December usage were billed in January.

The next bill for January, February and March usage will be billed in April. Water bills are due and payable within 30 days of issue.

Late payments are subject to a \$30 demand charge. Interest will be charged at 14% per annum on any payment not received by the Collector's Office by the due date. Continued failure to pay will result in water ser-

vice being shut off. There is a \$100.00 fee charged for water on/off. A lien will be placed on unpaid water and sewer charges on the following year's real estate tax bill.

Drug Awareness Week

The Select Board approved a request from Quabbin Drug Response Unifying Group to decorate town buildings and property with purple ribbons for Drug

Awareness Week in March. This is a yearly request by the group.

Department of Public Works

Select Board Chairman Maureen Marshall complimented the highway department on all their work keeping roadways clear during these winter storms.

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Select Board and FinCom held budget meeting

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Correspondent

HARDWICK – The Select Board met with the Finance Committee last Wednesday to begin discussions on the fiscal year 2027 budget.

Finance Committee member Mark Korzec gave an outline of the structure of the town's budget, and said there are 150 line items, each one representing various town departments and their needs. He said that the structure was confusing, and he sorted the line items into broader categories, reading them off from highest to lowest budgets.

The categories in order are schools, administration, police, highway, insurance, general government, debt, and fire.

Korzec said schools account for about half of the town's overall budget, and the water pollution treatment plant, which is not included in the line items, accounts for about \$900,000. Korzec said that amount is equal to or slightly more than the police department.

Korzec also outlined the top sources of revenue for the town, which include property taxes, receipts, excise taxes, New Braintree Police Department reimbursements, and payment in lieu of taxes. He said property taxes amount to about 75% of all revenue.

Korzec said investments are generating little revenue.

See HARDWICK, page 6



Submitted photos

Shea Baker, Rhianna Burke and Gracie Burke paint Cinderella's pumpkin patch.

HCT presents 'Cinderella,' enchanted edition

HUBBARDSTON – The Hubbardston Community Theatre presents Roger and Hammerstein's "Cinderella," enchanted edition on March 20, 21 and 22 at the Hubbardston Center School, 8 Elm St., in the gymnasium.

Performances are Friday, March 20 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, March 21 at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 22 at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15 adults age 12 and up, \$12 for senior citizens and children age 3 to 11 and free for children age 2 and under. People may pay by cash, check to HCT or Venmo. Tickets are avail-

able at the door or may be reserved in advance by emailing hubtheatre123@gmail.com.

Director and choreographer is Amanda Hakala Schuster, assistant director Erin Blackstone and choral director Bethany Stefano.

The timeless enchantment of a magical fairy tale is reborn with the Rodgers and Hammerstein hallmarks of originality, charm and elegance. As adapted for the stage, with great warmth and more than a touch of hilarity, this romantic fairy

See CINDERELLA, page 6



Lyra Pelletier and Tessa Burke try on their costumes for the Prince's ball.

Select Board reviewed FY 27 sewer budget

By Ryan Drago
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HARDWICK – The Select Board met on March 9 and had the fiscal year 2027 sewer budget on their agenda.

Water Pollution Control Facilities Superintendent Scott Potter answered questions from the board members and explained which items in the budget are fixed costs and which ones are considered discretionary.

According to Potter, he says the plant expenses could be considered discretionary.

The superintendent said there has been a lot of in-house work being done and without having to budget for outside contract work.

Potter said the "majority of our budget is costs we don't control." These costs relate to fuel and electricity.

The Select Board asked Potter how the department handled sludge. A tanker comes in to handle the sludge, according to Potter.

The board will have Potter back for another meeting with the Select Board when they meet with the Finance Committee.

Potter said the plant is running well. This is the first year that the Sewer Department budget features retirement, and the budget also notes that they have one vacant position. The board

See SEWER BUDGET, page 8

Marine animals visited Haston library

By Ryan Drago
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Haston Free Public Library, 161 North Main St., had some underwater friends visiting from the Mystic Aquarium recently.

This program is known as the Traveling Touch Tank and is a popular program designed for large groups to learn about the marine life that lives at the Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut. Educators from the Mystic Aquarium bring an assortment of live invertebrates such as lobsters, horseshoe

crabs and shellfish and are the usual features of the touch tank.

Youth Services Librarian, Brianna Lamb, said the traveling touch tank had an excellent turnout with over 100 people cycling through.

"We're really happy with the turnout," Lamb said.

The Mystic Aquarium presenters were fantastic, and kids got to learn a lot about the aquatic life that can be seen at the aquarium. With a big turnout, the presenters brought a small group of children into the room at a time for miniature presentations on their traveling touch tank guests.

While other families waited to see the tanks, the



Submitted Photos

Kids got to work on a crab craft at the library before exploring the touch tank.

School Committee OK'd FY 27 budget proposal

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – Superintendent Tim McCormick presented a revised version of the school district's direct-cost operating budget for fiscal year 2027 to the School Committee.

"We were able to, between January and now... based on some needs of certain students that have either come into the district or are leaving the district, we were able to identify some additional costs but also some savings," he said at the Feb. 26 meeting.

McCormick said they identified an additional \$135,724 for support staff costs, but a \$474,352 reduction in out-of-dis-

trict tuition costs, for a net reduction of \$387,417. He said there are still costs that are fluid, and that he will share those with the School Committee once they are set.

He said the revised proposed budget for FY 27 is 5.32% less than the approved FY 26 budget.

McCormick said the benefits of a responsible budget include stable class sizes, keeping special education services closer to home, fewer out-of-district transports and tuition costs and staff retention. He said the school district has invested in high-quality instructional materials and professional development

See SCHOOL COMMITTEE, page 10



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SPORTS

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Indians fall in state playoffs



NORTH BROOKFIELD – After a successful girls basketball campaign, North Brookfield landed a spot in the Division 5 State Tournament, drawing a familiar opponent as the Indians faced off with Bethany Christian Academy.

The Indians offense was not able to get enough scoring and was defeated 45-29, ending their playoff run quickly.

The Indians usually play Bethany Christian twice a season, and North Brookfield split the games this season. Their season finishes 11-7.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Kalyn Roy rushes down the court after making a rebound.



Milcalia Ayala takes a free throw.



Sophia Giangrande eyes a teammate across the court.



Whitney Reno corrals the ball.



Sophia Dufresne heads down the court

Local high school seniors headed to All-Star Games

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the team rosters for the 2026 Western Massachusetts Senior High School All-Star Games. On Friday, Mar. 20, the Hall of Fame will host the 2026 All-Star event on the Jerry Colangelo Court of Dreams at the Hall of Fame. Sixty of the region's top seniors were selected from different divisions to participate in the final high school contests of their prep career.

"We are honored to welcome Western Massachusetts' top high school basketball players to the 15th annual All-Star celebration at the Basketball Hall of Fame," said John L. Doleva, President and CEO of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. "This event is a special opportunity to recognize the hard work and achievements of these outstanding seniors, and we invite the community to join us as they take the court one final time in their high school careers."

A committee of local coaches and media members, representing each division on both the boys' and girls' sides, selected the teams. Using the designated classes for the PVIAC Tournament, the players will be divided into six teams: two girls' teams, two boys' teams of Class A and B players, and two boys' teams of Class C and D players. Only graduating

seniors are eligible for the All-Star Games. Rosters are on the next page.

For the 15th year, the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame will recognize one boy and one girl as the Western Massachusetts Players of the Year. A special presentation will be made for the recipients during halftime of one of the participating games. A panel of local media members selects the award winners, who are recognized for their achievements on the court as well as their sportsmanship and character off the court.

Participants in the Boys Class C and D game include: Ware's Jack Gaudreau and Brady Guimond, Palmer's Dylan Doherty, Gavin Smola, and Stephen Fredette, Mahar's Jayden Delgado, Granby's Zavien Fernandez, and Monson's Austin Meacham.

In the girls game, participants include: Minnechaug's Cailin O'Brien, Kelly Cronin, and Elizabeth Woytowicz, Mahar's Hayden Comeau, and Agawam's Isabella Laprise.

And in the Boys A and B game, participants include: Holyoke's Jordan King-Perilli, Chicopee's Dominic Garcia, Belchertown's Jake Pacunas, Minnechaug's Miles Fergus, Chicopee Comprehensive's Brody Fay, and South Hadley's Isiah James.

Senators outstanding season ends in Round of 16

ORANGE – The Mahar Regional High School girls basketball team, which won 16 regular season games, was defeated in the Round of 16 by Minuteman Regional High School. Mahar had an outstanding 16-2 record in the regular season, then entered the Class C Tournament and defeated Lenox High School in the quarterfinals. They would lose to Drury in the semifinals, and then entered the state tournament.

Mahar drew a local opponent in the Round of 32, taking on Palmer High School and playing an outstanding game, defeating the Panthers 64-35. But their offense came up just a bit short last Monday evening at Minuteman, losing 46-43. In the loss, Hayden Comeau had 25 points while Taylor Paluk added 13.

Mahar's season ends with an overall record of 18-4.

T-Birds upset by Wild

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds (22-27-5-2) put forth a big push down the stretch but succumbed to a late goal in falling 2-1 against the Iowa Wild (19-30-4-1) on Saturday night before the ninth consecutive Pink in the Rink sellout crowd of 6,793 inside the MassMutual Center.

The two clubs, who combined for 23 goals in two games in Des Moines in February, continued a week-end of tight checking in the opening period, with young netminders Will Cranley of Springfield (eight saves) and William Rousseau of the Wild (nine saves) turning away every shot that reached the target in period one. Dillon Dube came the

closest to breaking the tie for Springfield, ringing the post behind Rousseau with one offering.

The Thunderbirds were frequent penalty killers in the opening half of the game, and the Wild finally connected as their fourth power play began at 9:01 of the third, as Dylan Gambrell stole a clearing attempt, firing a shot on net to force a rebound off Cranley's pads. Tyler Pitlick drove to the rebound and backhanded it under Cranley to make it a 1-0 game as the veteran potted his ninth goal in 14 AHL games this season.

Cranley had to atone for his own gaffe late in the period when he turned a

See T-BIRDS, page 10



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

The participants are off in the 48th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Road Race last March.

Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race set to kick off big weekend

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HOLYOKE – Last March, for the first time in several years, it was gorgeous weather for the Holyoke St. Patrick's Road Race.

More than 6,000 people participated in this year's event, with nearly 5,000 participants finishing the 10K, or 6.2-mile course.

It was Samuel Whittaker of Salem, CT, who finished the race in 31:24. Alex Corbett, who placed second in last year's race, came in 23 seconds later at 31:47.

The top female finisher was Angelia Rafter at 34:13 and she placed 12th overall. Rafter is from Glastonbury, CT.

Among local finishers, Matt Provost of Monson was 19th overall at 35:09. Ryan Davis of South Hadley was a close 20th at 35:10. Lindsay



Samuel Whittaker crosses the first line first overall.

Smith of South Hadley finished 22nd at 35:12.

While the race course, commonly known as a "hilly" course throughout downtown Holyoke ending with a turn off Beech St.



Female winner Angelia Rafter crosses the finish line at 34:13.

and up the hill on Hampden St. toward the finish line remained largely the same, there was one noticeable change in this year's event.

Presidential Timing took over the official timing

duties after 4RUN3 went out of business last year. Those looking for more results from the events can go to www.presidentialtiming.com to look at more specific results from the race. Like previous timers, you can look up people by name and bib number to get more specific results.

This year, the road race is set to take place on Saturday, Mar. 21 with the main race beginning at 1 p.m.

This year's race would feature runners from all over the region, the state, and surrounding states as many are preparing for the Boston Marathon, set to take place in just under a month. Many runners over the years have enjoyed using the St. Patrick's Day Road Race as practice for the marathon because of the challenging

See ROAD RACE, page 10